DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 030 SO 011 863

AUTHOR Lazarus, Barbara B.; Knapp-Stump, Jennifer
TITLE Love and Work: New Chcices for Adulthood.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 9p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American Culture; Changing Attitudes; Decision Making; *Employment; Employment Opportunities; Family Relationship; *Females; Futures (of Scciety); Higher Education; Life Style; *Males; *Needs Assessment; Role Conflict; *Sex Role; *Social Change; Socialization; Sociocultural Patterns; Values

ABSTRACT

The paper examines social changes which influence the lives of all adults, particularly in areas of relationships between men and women and the balance between interpersonal relationships and jobs. The objective is to help college students understand cultural changes which have taken place in American society so that they will be better prepared to enter adult life. The paper is presented in five sections. Section I focuses on sex roles in transitiCn and explains why the balance between hcmemaking (women's traditional work) and wage earning (men's traditicnal work) is no lcnger viable. Section II identifies role conflicts faced by wives who wish to follow professional careers and husbands who wish tc share duties in the household and family. Section III describes types of commitments frequently made by adults, including commitments to other individuals, friends, occupations, and children. Section IV poses key questions to ask when setting priorities and making decisions regarding commitments: 1) Is a long term relationship a major priority? 2) How important are friendships? 3) Whose work takes priority? and 4) What priority do children have? The final section suggests how to organize a balance between life choices. Suggestions include talking to people in similar situations, planning systematically, keeping a measured pace, and delegating responsibility. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED177030

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

LOVE AND WORK: NEW CHOICES FOR ADULTHOOD

Barbara B. Lazarus

Jennifer Knapp-Stump

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara B. Lazarus
Jennifer Knapp-Stump
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 011 863

50

LOVE AND WORK: NEW CHOICES FOR ADULTHOOD

An Overview of Student Related Concerns

> *"We are in a society undergoing rapid changes in values, relationships, and structures. It all creates a situation more consistent with tension than with equanimity. It means that we must balance one kind of imperfect solution against another."* *

All cultures have an array of roles and contexts by which people shape their behaviors and expectations. As we know, the question of how to best lead life as an adult has become a concern for an increasing number of people in our society because they no longer find it possible to rely upon the traditional roles and contexts. In the past, life for most adults centered around family. In the traditional nuclear family in the United States, a man acquired certain rights through marriage: the right to share a household, the right to domestic labor, the rights to children and childcare, the rights to extra domestic labor (if needed), and exclusive sexual rights. A woman's failure to provide any of these was grounds for divorce. The husband, in turn, had parallel obligations: householder, sexual partner, begetter of children.

In their classic study of marriage, Blood and Wolf explained that:

> *"the main task of the man's function in marriage is to provide money which makes it possible to commandeer the goods and services consumed in family living--.*
>
> *For the husband (this) economic function is his main job in life. He spends most of his time at work, puts most of his energy into it, receives most of his satisfaction from it....*
>
> *To women the economic funcion is less important. Their lives tend to be centered in the home, in bearing and raising children, entertaining and visiting."* **

In short, traditionally men were socialized to believe that the important adult achievements were occupational; being a successful adult meant being a husband and father which meant being a good "economic provider". Being a successful adult woman meant being a successful wife, mother, and housekeeper. Balancing relationships and occupation for many people was accomplished by a woman managing the family, and a man an occupation.

Roles in Transition

Today our students confront a dramatically changed social context. Only 7% of the families in the United States fit the description of the so-called "average American family" with husband as exclusive wage earner and a wife at home taking care of two children. The revolutionary increase in the number of women in the paid labor force has had a particularly profound impact upon the lives of all adults, upon relationships between men and women, and the balance between relationships and jobs. For

* Kahne, Hilda "The Women in Professional Occupations: New Complexities for Chosen Roles" JOURNAL OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN DEANS AND COUNSELORS, Summer 1976.

** Blood and Wolf, On Marriage, 1965

Barbara B. Lazarus
Jennifer Knapp-Stump

many adults the traditional balance simply is not viable. Today, over 40% of all women work in the paid labor market and an increasing number of men choose to stay home. Moreover, more women are identifying occupation as a major concern at a time when more men are seeking satisfaction from their relationships with people at home. For example, in a recent poll at an Eastern womens college 50% of the students surveyed gave high value to having administrative responsibility. 68% want to become an authority in their field. Only 50% felt that raising a family was an important life goal (92% thought that marriage was very important). Finally, more adults are choosing to remain single, to live alone, to be single parents, or not to have children at all. In fact, many writers decry the end of the family, citing the rising divorce rate and the low birthrate as evidence.

This situation presents students (and graduates) with new decisions. To rephrase Freud, a healthy adult is one who can love and work - relationships and occupation need not be mutually exclusive concerns for either men or women, but different parts of life between which there can be coordination and compatibility. Simply put, both men and women can work at loving and love their work.* They can find new and creative ways to engage in their occupational and personal lives. Clearly, individuals must continue to choose where to put time and energy; however, by opening up the number of options from which we will find satisfaction in personal and professional concerns, the lives of men and women can become richer.

> *"When people think of their work and family as interacting systems rather than independent and dependent variables, different choices are made, and a wider range of alternatives becomes possible.... It is important to raise the possibility of making more conscious choices of life-styles in work, education, relationships, and families and to begin to create supports within the educational system for helping students make and implement these choices."* **

Role Conflicts

At first glance the availability of new choices may seem to make life more exciting, but it is certainly not easy. For example, even today, a woman who decides to work at a profession faces the problem of being the wrong sex for the role. A man who is a judge is a "judge"; a woman, a "woman judge", or more likely "an attractive/capable/successful/woman judge". A woman who chooses to work both at a relationship with a man and a profession faces a nearly normless situation in which no norms tell her how to apportion her time. Equally, for a man who has been socialized to believe that unless family needs reach a crisis the demands of the job comes first, a decision to seek satisfaction from his personal relationships may still be viewed as a professional sacrifice, laudable but foolish. Despite changes, since the duties of the "traditional husband" fall primarily in the occupational sphere and the duties of the "traditional wife" in the family sphere, a professional wife, and a husband who wishes to share tasks, each face a role conflict.

Beginning the Balancing Act: Making Commitments

How can we help? Obviously, an adult who is making decisions about family and occupations may start by looking at the commitments s/he wants to make to long term relationships to another person, to friends, to occupations, and to children. The nature of these commitments will determine the way in which s/he will work out such arrangements as care for children, or the house. An understanding of the changing social context in which decisions are made can be a useful place to begin. For example:

*Also see Kantor, Rosabeth Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review for Agenda and Policy, Russell Sage Foundation, 1977

** "The Company and the Family"; Jean R. Renshaw, RELATING WORK & EDUCATION Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977, Current issues in higher education.

- A Commitment to Primary Relationships

"'Til death do us part" is a vow fitting the actual lives of fewer and fewer people. In the last 12 years, the divorce rate has more than doubled; one out of every three marriages now ends in divorce. (On the East and West Coasts it is one out of two). Although the rate of re-marriage is extraordinarily high - evidence that people aren't rejecting marriage as an institution - more than a million men and women are now living together outside of marriage, a figure that has doubled since 1950. And between 1970 and 1975, the number of people choosing to live by themselves has increased by 40%. The options open for long term commitment have changed and the number of people choosing this type of commitment has changed as well. So have the questions, for example: how can a man "husband" a successful professional? How can a woman "wife" a man who wishes to share household tasks? If men and women make long term commitments but maintain separate households (sometimes called "the commuting marriage"), are they monogamous? With each other? Is this still important?

- A Commitment to Friends

Friendship has also changed. The increasing presence of women in the labor market is changing the nature of friendship and competition among women. We see more intimacy among men and women outside of marriage and more competition among women at the workplace. Perhaps because of the women's movement in general we are also seeing the emergence of new types of closeness and sharing between men. How will people react to these friendships? What new roles can friends play in the life of single adults? How can new lines of relationship be drawn? If men and women are colleagues on the job, how is the traditional balance of "work/sex" affected? How does a professional couple have time for any friends off the job?

As Theodore Nadelson, M.D. and Leon Eisenberg, M.D. wrote on "The Successful Professional Woman: On Being Married To One":

> *"Social activity, other than that connected with the workplace, tends to atrophy just because time together alone becomes so highly valued and other, even close friends, can be resented for intruding upon it."* *

- A Commitment to an Occupation

The commitment to occupation is also being seen in a new light. more than ever, personal lifestyle considerations impinge on job decision. More married (and unmarried) couples are on dual career tracts, constantly trying to set a balance between the claim of her job and his. In addition, some men and women are reducing their commitment to work, in order to make room for other interests.

* "The Successful Professional Woman: On Being Married To One", Theodore Nadelson, M.D. and Leon Eisenberg, M.D., Copyright 1977 American Psychiatric Association, AM J Psychiatry 134:10, October 1977.

They are turning to part time jobs, shared jobs, or interrupted career paths. As mentioned above, still others are finding themselves married and living in separate households, perhaps on opposite sides of the country or world.

> *"One of the most important costs of the dual-career marriage is time lost to companionship, a nonsexist cost borne equally by both partners, although even here equality is more apparent than real..... The more professionally ambitious the spouses are, the more togetherness will be invaded this way.....With two partners involved, the effects are psychologically multiplicative rather than additive."* *

Occupational commitment is a particularly complex issue in a world where people change career direction so often. For example, people under 30 tend to change jobs every year and a half; adults change occupational orientation three to five times in their lifetimes. Moreover many of the occupations in which today's generation of college students will be employed in ten years do not even exist today. Clearly, changing occupations further complicates balancing relationships and jobs. How can students prepare in a world where flexibility is the key in so many areas?

- A Commitment to the Next Generation

The decision to have children may be the most significant piece of the balancing act. The mere fact that it is seen as a decision is almost "revolutionary". In the Blood and Wolf study referred to above, they stated: *"most people get married because they believe they will find sexual fulfillment, emotional response, companionship, and the new experience of parenthood in marriage".* ** Read any of the traditional literature of marriage: children are the focal point, the cornerstone.

The belief in the economic necessity of children as a source of labor is a well known historical fact. In many societies a woman was not considered married until she had children. In some cultures today, a man can "return" a wife if she does not bear children. In most cultures and through most of our history children were a major purpose of married life. They were necessary to the production of goods in the present and to the continuity of society in the future. Today, however, children are more clearly analogous to consumer goods than to producer goods. This change in definition of children has not only affected their economic value to parents, but the amount of work needed to care for them. "Childhood" now lasts longer. Since the decision to have children no longer creates workers but work - and usually for women, it is not suprising that commitment to children is becoming a less dominant part of adult lives. The birth rate of American women has dropped to its lowest in history: 1.8 per woman, exactly half the 1957 level. There are now 7.6 million fewer children under the age of 13 than there were in 1970. Moreover, according to an article in the New York Times *** *"the percentage of married couples in which either the husband or the wife has been sterilized for contraceptive reasons has increased from 8.8% in 1965 to 16% in 1970 to 31.3 in 1975. In 1977 there were 7.2 million childless couples."*

* "The Successful Professional Woman: On Being Married to One", Theodore Nadelson, M.D. and Leon Eisenberg, M.D., Copyright 1977 American Psychiatric Association, AM J Psychiatry 134:10, October 1977.

** MARRIAGE, Blood and Wolf, 1965, P.6.

*** New York Times, October, 1977.

Obviously, the range of options for parenthood has also increased dramatically. Fewer people seem to be having children, yet the age for "safe" pregnancy is pushing up over 35 and there is more latitude for the time of parenthood. * Careers - even second careers - can be well established before a man or woman becomes a first time parent. Moreover, norms about single parenthood are changing, encouraging more women to keep their babies out of marriage and encouraging single women - and men to become parents by adopting. But a commitment to having children raises a critical question, with a time consuming answer: Who will raise the children?

Making Decisions/Setting Priorities

Outlining key questions is a good place to begin deciding what commitments one might make in each of these areas - primary relationships with another adult, friendships, jobs, and children; then more work begins. Priorities must be set. Supermen (and women) tales aside, time and energy are scarce commodities. For example:

- Is a long term relationship to another person a major priority? If so what sacrifice is each partner willing to make to insure its success? Working at a marriage or another long term relationship takes time and will detract from other activities.

- How important are friendships? What kind of time does an individual wish to give to friends? What impact will this have on commitment to an occupation, or another long term relationship?

- Whose work takes priority? On what basis will the decisions be made over time? Does work take priority over relationships?

- What priority do children have? How much time does an individual or couple wish to give to child care? At what sacrifice?

If there are disagreements between people who wish to make these decisions together, the situation may be more difficult. For example, if a man believes "I will help my wife with the children" he may be assuming that it will be her task. After all, how many women say "I will help my husband with the children?" How many of us have heard wives who "help their husbands with the housework?"

All this assumes that people have total control over their choices. The situation gets more complex - as it is for most people - when all options are not open. For example, most people (men and women) work out of necessity, not choice. Many people find themselves single not because they are not interested in a primary commitment, but because their husband (or wife) leaves, or because they are unable to find someone to whom to make a primary commitment. Some people wish to make a commitment to children, but are childless. Moreover, many people find it is not really possible - or necessarily desirable - to consciously evaluate all the costs and benefits of each decision. The fact that something "feels right" is important.

Whatever the circumstances, a great deal has been written which suggests ways in which people can handle these concerns. Much may seem obvious, for example:

*Pamela Daniels and Kathy Weingarten, "Now or Later? The Timing of Parenthood in Adult Lives", working paper, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA.

- Talking to a Variety of People

  Most people agree that it is important to begin by surveying the field for ideas, talking to everyone who has found him or herself in a similar situation in the past or present. Sometimes there are groups for people who find themselves in a particular position: single parents, parents of twins, dual career parents, etc. The literature is full of examples. It is important to remember that other people may have discovered solutions to problems.

- Planning Systematically

  Planning is considered another key. Articles suggest: make charts, organize lists, divide up responsibilities. It is also important to remember that sharing planning is as important as sharing tasks. Many people point out that in working out a balance which makes sense it is important not to forget that it is all right to divide up responsibilities on a traditional basis.

- Keeping a Measured Pace

  Many people have noted that women have been raised to handle a whole series of complex issues with cool and diplomacy - to be "natural managers" and suggest that people use these skills. Counselors also advise people to be prepared for the problems associated with changing context. For example, it can be a wrenching experience to move from an orderly office to a hectic home life or vice versa.

- Delegating Responsibility

  Finally, it is important to learn to delegate responsibility to others. Delegating responsibiliyy for care of the house and particularly children is very difficult for many adults. Here again, the literature says that it is important to learn to keep priorities in perspective. For example, it may or may not matter to an individual if the household help cooks a child's food longer than s/he would, fixes hair differently, as long as s/he is cheerful and keeps the children cheerful.

Obviously, the suggestions do not make the balance easy to accomplish, particularly because while some attitudes towards the roles of men and women have changed, structures have not. Part time work, flexible job hours, and quality child care - structural "solutions" to many of the issues raised by the new choices facing adults - are simply not available in the quantity or quality required. In addition, the situation is made more complex because both the nature of choices and people's values and needs change over the lifespan, making flexibility and constant reassessment an essential part of the decision making process. Finally, as many of us have found, our students may find it hard to relate to these as immediate concerns at all. To them life choices do not involve these issues. Teaching students to ask these as serious questions may be one of our biggest challenges.

Many of the changes currently taking place in society are the result of new and different kinds of ways adults are facing these issues. In too many cases the choices are uncomfortable and people find themselves lonely and alone in decisions they face with others. Travelling an uncharted territory can be frightening. With help it can be better; new choices can offer an opportunity to experience new options, to enjoy life more fully and to enlarge ourselves as individuals.

Barbara B. Lazarus
Jennifer Knapp-Stumpp